



North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission



512 N. Salisbury Street, Raleigh, North Carolina 27604-1188, 919-733-3391
Charles R. Fullwood, Executive Director

April 16, 1998

Mr. Robert Johnson, Office Manager
U. S. Army Corps of Engineers
Regulatory Branch
151 Patton Avenue, Room 143
Asheville, North Carolina 28801-5006

RECEIVED

APR 20 1998

DISTRICT III

SUBJECT: NCDOT Nationwide 404 Permit Application
Widen SR 1364 - Needmore Road - Little Tennessee River
Macon County, North Carolina

Dear Mr. Johnson:

Mr. W. Trent Anderson of the North Carolina Department of Transportation is requesting a letter of concurrence from the North Carolina Wildlife Resources Commission (NCWRC) to obtain a 404 permit from the U. S. Army Corps of Engineers. I have reviewed information provided by the applicant, and onsite investigations were conducted on June 26, 1997, and August 15, 1997, to further assess construction impacts on wildlife and fisheries resources. These comments are provided in accordance with provisions of the Clean Water Act of 1977 (33 U.S.C. 466 et seq.) and the Fish and Wildlife Coordination Act (48 Stat. 401, as amended; 16 U.S.C. 661-667d).

The applicant proposes to widen, grade, and pave SR 1364 (Needmore Road) adjacent to the Little Tennessee River in Macon County. Construction involves cut and fill slopes adjacent to the river and the installation of culvert structures in Bird Branch and several unnamed tributaries, to the Little Tennessee River. This reach of the Little Tennessee River, from a biological diversity perspective, is perhaps the most significant habitat in Western North Carolina. The NCWRC is concerned about potential project impacts to three federally listed aquatic species such as the endangered little-wing pearlymussel (*Pegias fabula*), the endangered Appalachian elktoe (*Alasmodonta raveneliana*), and the threatened spotfin chub (*Hybopsis monacha*), as well as other state listed aquatic species. In addition, the Little Tennessee River from the Georgia/North Carolina state line downstream to Fontana Reservoir is classified as critical habitat for the spotfin chub. This area also supports an excellent smallmouth bass population as well as other game and non-game fish species and provides habitat for several wildlife species such as river otter, wood ducks, and herons. This project may cause short-term turbidity during construction, but upon completion, could greatly reduce sediment inputs to the Little Tennessee River.

The NCWRC is concerned about potential project impacts to aquatic resources in this drainage; however, we do not object to the issuance of a 404 permit provided the following conditions be placed on the subject permit: